

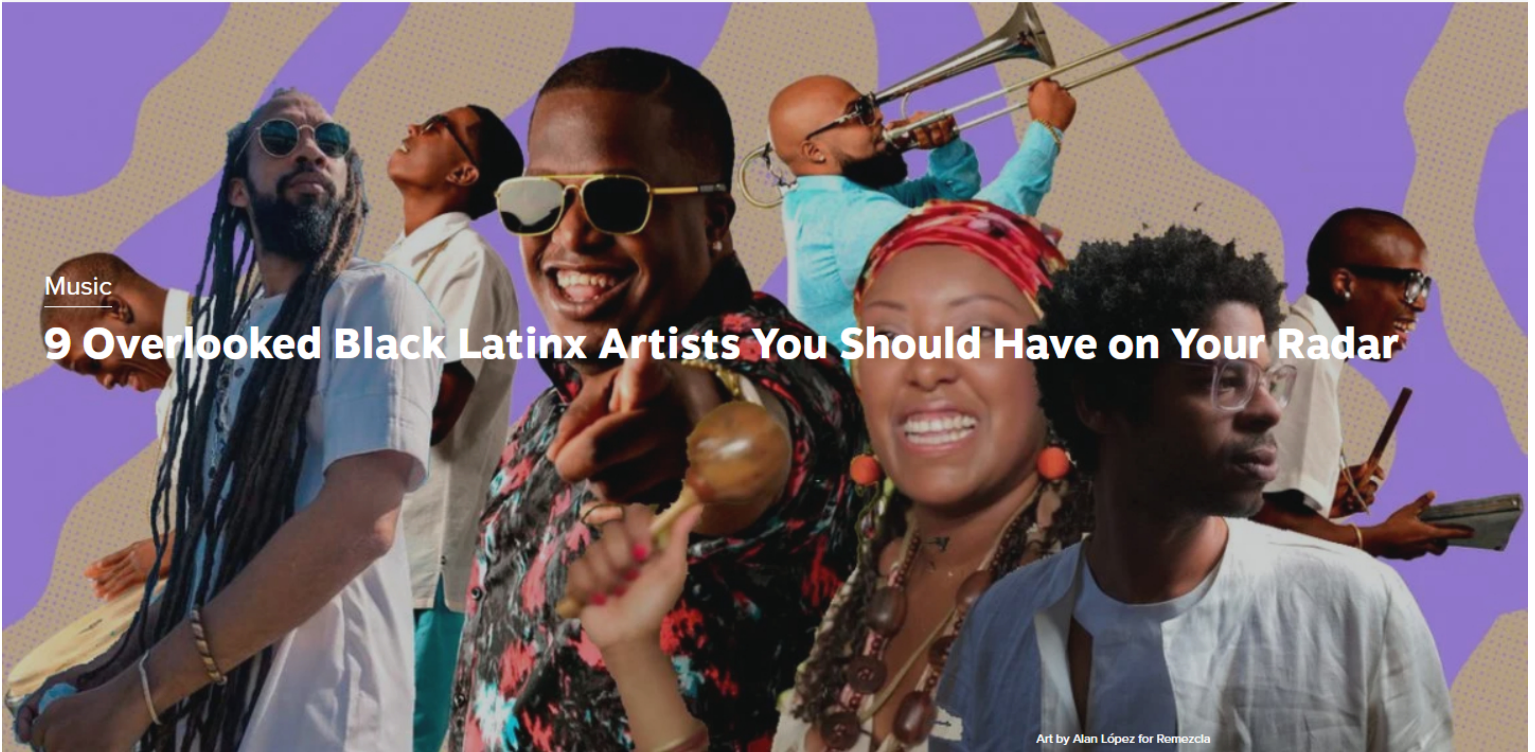
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Music

9 Overlooked Black Latinx Artists You Should Have on Your Radar

Art by Alan López for Remezcla



Written by [Cheky](#) | 10 months ago



Let's be real: There is really no point in celebrating Latinx Heritage Month without acknowledging the contribution of Black Latinxs to the rich culture of our entire continent, especially when it comes to music. Whether you're spinning to a salsa track, going hasta abajo with some good perreo, or even seducing a partner with your [tango](#) moves, many of Latin America's most popular genres can be traced back to their Black origins.

Black Latin Americans and Latinxs are often left out of the music conversation due to the whitewashing of their history (read: [reggaeton](#)) or the lack of representation in both mainstream and underground spaces, from pop charts to independent music festivals, so we need to be in charge of writing and preserving our own history.

From irrefutable icons like Celia Cruz and Ismael Rivera, to fresh faces who are rerouting the spotlight in our direction, like [Amara La Negra](#) and [Los Rakas](#), Afro-Latinxs are everywhere and their art is undoubtedly worthy. Two of reggaeton's current biggest stars are [Sech](#) and [Ozuna](#), are linking the genre back to its roots, and don't even get us started with a little someone who goes by the name of [Cardi B](#).

Black Latin American musicians continue to carve their own path to recognition and representation, but many of them are flying under people's radars. That's exactly why we compiled a list of nine Black Latin American and Afro-Latinx artists and bands we feel have been overlooked and deserve your time. Of course, our comment section is always open to hear from you, so let us know your personal recommendations.

1

Kombilesa Mí



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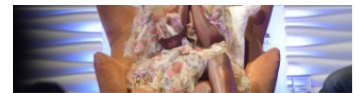
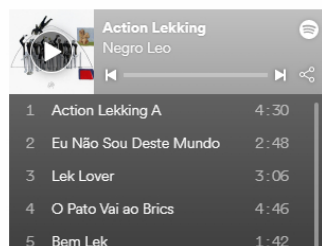
Colombian collective Kombilesa Mí are on the forefront of the RFP movement (or rap folklórico palenquero), a rich genre where local tradition from San Basilio de Palenque meets urban sounds. Their recently released album *Esa Palenquera* overflows with African and Afro-Colombian rhythms like bullerengue, chalusonga, son de negro, soukous and champeta, to name a few, amplified by the striking energy of hip-hop, rapping in both Spanish and Palenquero about themes like black pride, natural hair, and of course, never-ending partying. Through their art, they have become an inspiration for Palenque youth to embrace their their own racial identity and language.

2 Betsayda Machado y la Parranda El Clavo



Betsayda Machado has dedicated her whole life to singing, but with *Loe Loe (Rural Recordings Under the Mango Tree)*, her 2017 album recorded with Parranda El Clavo, she has been able to tour the world with the mission of spreading the Afro-Venezuelan sounds from the Caribbean coast, especially from Barlovento, the black town where she grew up. Together, they make songs that are mostly rhythmically rooted in the San Juan Bautista worship music and its instrumentation. Machado leads the pack with her powerful voice, singing about religion, celebration, everyday life, love, and the unavoidable decaying socioeconomic situation in Venezuela.

3 Negro Leo



Film Here Are Your 2020 Latinx Emmy Nominees

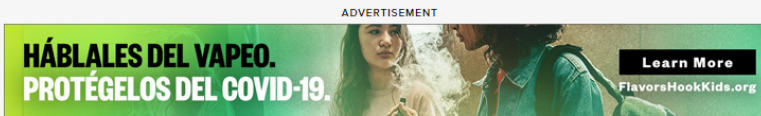


Film 'Build Solidarity': These Two Documentaries Capture the Uncertainty & Significance of This Moment



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6	Revirá	2:43
7	Mulato	3:07
8	Action Lekking M	2:16
9	Não Vai Acabar	2:11
10	Action Lekking O	2:44

There's no use in trying to fit Carioca artist Negro Leo in a single box. He could be rewriting tropicália on one track, channeling Syd Barrett on the next one, tacking atonal free jazz on another one, or simply going 80s electro-pop – like he does in his latest single with Tintapreta, "São Paulo Cospe Fogo." Negro Leo is all about subverting the norm, and he does so with a radiating, sometimes off-putting joy. Born Leonardo Gonçalves, he claims the word "negro" on his musical alias as a political statement, taking pride in his color in a country as racially divided as Brazil.

4 El Individuo



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Country to explore topics of race, self-improvement, self-love, and life in Cuba, like reggae and dancehall to transport us to the Caribbean with his music. Individuo is affiliated to the first Cuban independent label, DJ Jigüe's Guámpara, and his black anthem "Mi Raza," a potent track where he goes through African American and Afro-Cuban history and its icons: from Malcom X to Juan Gualberto Gomez, from the Black Panthers to Cuba's Partido Independiente de Color, to better understand his blackness and connect with it deeper.

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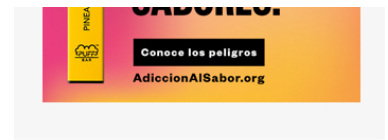
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Mabely Lagarcha has found in genres from the African diaspora like jazz, soul, hip-hop, R&B, and reggae, the raw material to build the mesmerizing songs she has released to date under the Mabiland

moniker. The Quibdó native is not afraid to wear her heart on her sleeve, opening a window to her desires and insecurities with her music, being 1995, her debut album, the clearest example. The 23-year-old artist can switch between the most carefree spoken word, to a heart-wrenching Amy Winehouse-level growl without breaking a sweat. If this is only the beginning of her career, her future seems blindingly bright.



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6 La Tribu de Abrante



Musical director Hiram Abrante fulfilled his long-time interest in giving Afro-Boricua music a contemporary spin after forming his 12-piece ensemble La Tribu de Abrante in 2010. Alongside his friends and brothers, Abrante borrowed elements from urban genres like reggaeton and hip-hop and introduced them to his own bomba and plena compositions, giving place to an explosive cocktail of syncopated rhythms played in traditional percussion, dazzling brass melodies and sassy lyrics about sex and partying. Already big in the island, La Tribu de Abrante have dedicated their efforts in bringing the sounds of black Puerto Rico to the rest of the world.



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7 Afrosideral



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started his career in Cuba's hip-hop scene in the late 90s, and he hasn't stopped s of music ever since. On his latest project, *Afrosideral*, he turns to electronic struct a brand of club music that is directly informed by his Yoruba spirituality.

His first major release under this new nickname, *El Olimpo De Los Orishas*, finds a perfect balance between dance genres like techno and dub, Afro-Cuban drumming, and traditional chants in Yoruba researched and recorded by Sublebao-Beat himself, mostly devoting his words to worshipping the orishas and acknowledging his black origins.

8

Se Armó Kokoa



Se Armó Kokoa (or SAK) believe in the power of unity. After striving in the Uruguayan hip-hop scene on their own, members Viky Style, Fabik and Eugenia formed SAK in 2016 to amplify their message as loud as they possibly could. Their 2018 debut album *Levántate* is a call to action in the key of boom bap to rebel against the system that oppresses them as Afro-Uruguayan women and other marginalized groups, including immigrants. Colombian rapper Valencia recently joined their ranks, bumping up the energy of this group that will make you jump and reflect at the same time

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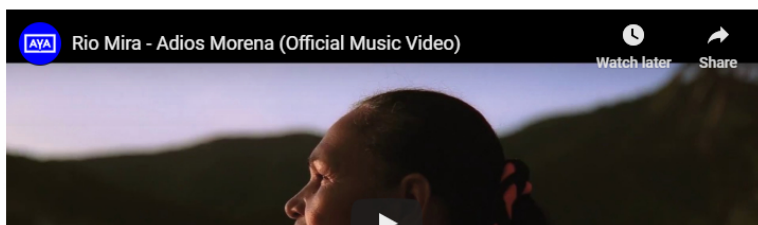
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9

Rio Mira





Just like the river that gives the project its name, Rio Mira is where Colombian and Ecuadorian music meet and create magic. Fronted by Ecuadorian seasoned singer/songwriter Karla Kanora and joined by an all-star cast of musicians, Rio Mira create music based on the joyous sounds of the marimba, the key instrument of the South-Pacific black music that connects both countries. Their sole album to date is *Marimba del Pacífico*, released by ZZK offshoot imprint AYA Records in 2017, and gathers 12 songs that uplift and celebrate the sounds of the self-liberated slaves in the Pacific with special love and care.